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FCC: NEBRASKA RANKS SECOND IN DSL HIGH SPEED INTERNET DEPLOYMENT

LINCOLN – Nebraska's availability of digital subscriber line (DSL) high speed Internet service through local incumbent telephone companies ranks second in the nation according to a recently released Federal Communications Commission (FCC) report.

"It is good news," Second District Commissioner Anne Boyle of Omaha said. "The Legislature and Congress have been interested in providing the latest technology to all consumers. The report shows Nebraska is far ahead of the rest of the nation with the exception of one state."

In its findings on high speed services for Internet access, the FCC found that Nebraska had a DSL saturation of 89 percent availability where incumbent local telephone companies operate. Only Georgia, with 90 percent, had a higher rating. DSL and cable modem are the primary methods of offering wireline access to high speed, or broadband, Internet services. Fixed wireless and satellite providers also offer customers broadband access to the internet.

"We have been exploring every method to provide broadband access statewide," Boyle said. "As sparse as some of our areas are, our various providers have done a good job."

Fifth District Commissioner Jerry Vap of McCook said, "[The FCC] report confirms and reinforces the data we have gathered for our report." The Commission's 2007 Broadband Survey report said 94 percent of Nebraska's 577 population centers have broadband access to the Internet. "The information in the survey is necessary for economic development and to answer broadband inquiries that we receive," Vap said.

"DSL is one piece of the broadband puzzle, but I believe when you throw in cable modem and wireless, we're very high," he added. "The fact that Nebraska is in the top two of the nation is a pretty good indicator of what is available to the people of the state."

"This report shows the commitment of Nebraska providers to bring broadband to communities throughout the state." First District Commissioner Frank Landis of Lincoln said. "Statewide deployment of broadband is essential to continued economic growth for many communities in Nebraska" he added.

The Commission remains involved in overseeing broadband deployment through such programs as the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund (NIEF) grant program which funds infrastructure development for broadband accessibility in rural areas; the Nebraska Tele-Health Network which utilizes broadband

telecommunications services for hospitals and medical centers around the state; the Nebraska Universal Service Fund which assists telephone companies finance upgrades to their networks; and the Commission's own broadband survey program.

"Further," said Commission Chairman Rod Johnson of Sutton, "widespread broadband availability has opened up opportunities for rural schools through Nebraska's distance learning programs." Distance learning gives students access via the internet to live instruction on a variety of subjects such as advanced math, sciences and foreign languages. "Creating educational opportunity is a direct investment in Nebraska's future," Commissioner Johnson said.

"Nebraska's broadband deployment is impressive from a national standpoint," said Third District Commissioner Tim Schram of Gretna. "Better means of communication benefits all Nebraskans, both urban and rural," he added. Commissioner Schram also cautioned, "Technologies that rely on broadband access to consumers are evolving rapidly therefore we must remain diligent in our broadband initiatives to keep Nebraska near the top of the list."